

Date: 30 November 1991  
 Opposition: Norwich City  
 Competition: League

Times	Guardian	Sunday Times
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## THE TIMES

### Liverpool emerge title contenders

Liverpool 2 Norwich City 1

IT SAYS much for Liverpool's character that despite an erratic season they still refuse to concede that their interest in the League championship has already ended. Certainly, once a sizeable casualty list has receded, a serious revival in the new year cannot yet be discounted.

Grobbeelaar, on whose recent exemplary form Liverpool have constructed an unbeaten sequence of six League and cup matches, became the latest player to voice the "anything could happen yet" line after a narrow, but deserved, victory over Norwich City.

"People have said that this is not the Liverpool of old but we have still only lost three League games," he said. "Youngsters have been called upon to do a man's job and they have responded tremendously."

Grobbeelaar does have a point, albeit a laboured one, even though novices like McManaman and Marsh are now clearly displaying signs of physical and mental fatigue.

Before the game, Graeme Souness, the Liverpool manager, had said that he feared his team would suffer some form of reaction in the wake of the midweek Uefa Cup tie against Swarovski Tirol in Austria.

He was right, for after gracing some fluent early football with two fine goals, Liverpool lost their momentum and subsequently surrendered the initiative. Dave Strnger, the Norwich manager, departed from Anfield insisting not only that his team had been denied a point which they more than deserved, but that the game had been effectively decided in only the third minute when Molby drove in a shot of venomous power with an arrogant disregard for distance and an unsympathetic angle.

"You just cannot legislate for something like that," he said. "That one shot really shook our composure."

Although a sense of complacency constantly diminished Molby's contribution, he was to figure prominently in Liverpool's second goal after 31 minutes when he steered in a firm drive which gave every indication of finding its intended target until Saunders altered its trajectory by applying the deftest of flicks.

Gunn did marvellously well to reach the ball after readjusting his balance but he was powerless to prevent Houghton slipping home the rebound.

Beckford's splendid headed goal from Ullathorne's cross in the 34th minute should have guaranteed a tense second period, but with Norwich guilty of unnecessary over-elaboration in the final third of the field, Liverpool held firm to register only their second League win in ten outings.

LIVERPOOL: B Grobbelaar; G Ablett, D Burrows, S Nicol, M Wright, N Tanner, D Saunders, R Houghton, S McManaman, J Molby, S McMahon (sub: M Marsh).  
 NORWICH CITY: B Gunn; D Phillips, M Bowen, I Butterworth (sub: C Sutton), P Blades, J Goss, R Ullathorne, R Fleck, R Newman, T Sherwood, D Beckford.

Referee: B Hill.

## the guardian

### Molby walks alone

THE scouser in the bobble hat had no doubts about the quality of Jan Molby's goal. 'That's the best shot I've ever seen in the world, ever,' he cried, and as he was only about six years old he was probably not exaggerating.

As the child's excitement swelled to dangerous proportions, his father told him to sit down and shut up. Dad glowered at all before him with his arms defiantly folded. Among those who remember better times, Liverpool these days are more likely to cause hypertension than hysteria.

Molby's peach of a goal, after three minutes, brought matters to a premature climax. It was disdainfully driven from beyond the left angle of the penalty area after Butterworth had cleared Ablett's free-kick, and was a strike of such perfection that Baron Munchhausen would have been proud to relate the tale. Its style belonged to Molby, accomplishment achieved with a minimum expenditure of energy. There are times when the Dane's amply proportioned figure suggests that he has mistaken the Liverpool anthem You'll Never Walk Alone for a coaching manual. But in this, and the perceptiveness of his passing, he was unmatched.

For Liverpool the rest remained less encouraging. McManaman, the coltish enthusiast of August, has hardly lasted the autumn, never mind the winter. Ablett's distribution problems were on the scale of the Soviet economy. McMahon, artfully pacing himself from the outset, looked particularly weary after his European exertions and was substituted.

Graeme Souness's expression of relief afterwards was so brief that Kenny Dalglish seemed an incorrigible gossip by comparison. While Liverpool remained 14 points behind the leaders there was nothing worth talking about, although Saunders deserved a sentence or two.

Heartened by his two goals in Austria, he had a bright first half and made a largely unnoticed contribution to Liverpool's second goal, instinctively flicking his head at Molby's shot to wrong-foot the goalkeeper and enable Houghton, following up, to score.

Norwich were full of bright theories, comfortable on the ball and creators of an excellent goal when Beckford headed in Ullathorne's cross from the left, only his second League goal since a pounds 925,000 summer move from Port Vale.

Burrows's excellent saving tackle denied him a third from a bullocking run three minutes from time.

Ullathorne often caught the eye before half-time when his combinations with Bowen, fulfilling a free role alongside the strikers, held promise. Then Bowen switched flanks, to try to prey on Ablett's shortcomings, and interest died.

SCORERS: Liverpool: Molby (3min), Houghton (30). Norwich City: Beckford (34).  
 Liverpool: Grobbelaar; Ablett, Burrows, Nicol, Wright, Tanner, Saunders, Houghton, McManaman, Molby, McMahon (Marsh, 62).

Norwich City: Gunn; Phillips, Bowen, Butterworth (Sutton, 48), Blades, Goss, Ullathorne, Fleck, Newman, Sherwood, Beckford.

Referee: B Hill (Kettering).

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Jaded Liverpool take the points

LIVERPOOL 2 NORWICH 1

LIVERPOOL 2 (4-4-2): Grobbelaar; Nicol, Wright, Tanner, Ablett; Houghton, McMahon (sub: Marsh 62min), Burrows, Molby; Saunders, McManaman.

NORWICH 1 (4-4-2): Gunn; Phillips, Blades, Butterworth (sub: Sutton 48min), Ullathorne; Goss, Sherwood, Newman, Bowen; Fleck, Beckford.

Goals: Molby (4min) 1-0; Houghton (31min) 2-0; Beckford (35min) 2-1.

Weather: misty. Ground: soft.

Referee: B Hill (Kettering).

A FREAK goal and a cruel deflection allowed Liverpool to inflict only the second defeat on Norwich in 11 League matches, but the narrow margin had much to do with Liverpool's exertions in midweek in Austria and the resulting tiredness.

Molby, who was responsible for both goals, was putting up more than a few pounds overweight, and when McMahon retired after an hour the midfield looked thin enough to allow Norwich an equaliser. A marvellous tackle by Burrows on Beckford denied them.

It took Liverpool only four minutes to take the lead with an extraordinary shot by Molby. A free kick on the Norwich right was cleared almost to the touchline, where the Dane, without hesitation, hit a drive which soared beyond Gunn. The Norwich goalkeeper had been given a warm reception by the Kop in recognition of his enviable record of conceding only one goal in four previous appearances at Anfield but he, like everyone else, was left to wonder where such a devastating strike had come from.

The injury jinx which has depleted Liverpool for much of the season reared its head when McMahon soon needed treatment for damage to his left knee. With a patch over his left eye, hurt in an earlier contretemps, he still managed to exert a considerable influence in midfield.

Norwich had little to offer up front, with Beckford all too easily held by Wright.

Until this match, Beckford had managed only one League goal since his Pounds 925,000 transfer from Port Vale, and that makes Sunderland, the much-maligned Liverpool signing from Derby, a prince.

When Norwich, unbeaten in their previous five games, did break forward, Fleck was in a position to score his 10th goal of the season until a timely and effective tackle by Ablett stopped him on the edge of the penalty area.

Gunn must have known it was not going to be his day when a more straightforward Molby shot from 20 yards out took a deflection. The goalkeeper did well to change direction and parry it, only for Houghton to pounce on the rebound and score.

Out of the sea of red which threatened to engulf them, Norwich quickly pulled a goal back. Ullathorne's seemingly innocuous cross was well met by a good jump by Beckford, and Grobbelaar could not hold his header which, to the striker's evident relief, went in off the post.

There are signs that the quick, accurate passing upon which Bill Shankly founded 25 years of Liverpool success, is returning.

They are still very much in Europe and, with Norwich, in the last 16 of the League Cup. But it must have been disconcerting for Liverpool that despite their having so much possession and a handsome lead, Norwich gradually came more into it.

Ullathorne made some excellent runs down the right from full-back, and put over crosses which increasingly troubled Wright and Tanner.

## BRITISH SOCCER WEEK

### Molby's magic has everybody's purring

Danish international Jan Molby provided the stunning highlight of Liverpool's 2-1 triumph against Norwich after just three minutes.

Molby showed all his skill and vision as he picked up Norwich defender Ian Butterworth's half clearance from a Gary Ablett free-kick wide on the left.

He struck a curling 30 yard shot high over astonished keeper Bryan Gunn and into the top far corner of the net.

Molby also had a hand in Liverpool's second on the half hour, Gunn getting down to parry his deflected shot only for Ray Houghton to slot home the rebound from close range.

Norwich pulled back a goal four minutes later, Darren Beckford soaring to head home Robert Ullathorne's deep left wing cross at the far post despite Bruce Grobbelaar's efforts.

The visitors had chances to equalise, notably when Ablett just managed to turn another Ullathorne cross over the bar off the toes of skipper Mark Bowen.

And three minutes from time David Burrows injured himself making a brilliant last-ditch tackle in the box to rob Beckford, who was surging through looking for his second goal.

Houghton saw a second-half effort well blocked by Gunn whose luck held as Ablett fired the rebound straight at defender Paul Blades.

"It was a bit special," Molby grinned afterwards. "The goals I've been getting lately have only been penalties, so it was nice to get one like that. You only get one or two like that in your lifetime. It sat up nicely and was there to be hit and I decided to go for it. You never know if they will go in but I had a good feeling when I hit it. There was no way the goalkeeper was going to get near it."

Boss Graeme Souness enthused: "I think the match was worth coming to see for that goal alone. It was a very special goal. We made a good start but we faded as we expected, because we have had a hard few weeks of late. I have to be happy with three points because Norwich are a very good footballing side."

Norwich striker Robert Fleck said he was disappointed that neither he nor David Phillips did not clear the ball before Molby's third minute strike. "But it was one of the best goals I've seen in a long time," Fleck admitted. "It was a lot better goal than I have ever scored."